



Music Education Program and Student Performance: A Correlational Study in Hebei, China

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RESEARCH ARTICLE INFORMATION	ABSTRACT
Received: February 18, 2026 Reviewed: May 14, 2026 Accepted: June 16, 2026 Published: June 30, 2026  Copyright © 2025 by the Author(s). This open-access article is distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License.	Music education is essential for the student's growth and cultural preservation. However, the music education quality varies between higher education institutions across China. Despite the aesthetic education promoted by national policies, no literature demonstrates a concrete relationship between the multidimensional education quality and performance levels in provincial higher education music programs. Thus, this study aimed to fill the existing gap in the field of music education by exploring the relationship between China's higher music education programs and student performance. This study was based on the "Quality Music Education Framework" and used a descriptive quantitative correlational study to explore six dimensions of educational quality, such as engagement, excellence, creative and active, student-centered, progression, and authenticity. The validated questionnaire was sent to 192 undergraduate students of three music degree programs at universities in Hebei province in China. The results showed that respondents gave high ratings for all dimensions, with the majority having good music performance scores. All dimensions were positively correlated with performance levels. Therefore, barriers to employing multidimensional education quality in higher education music degree programs were not insurmountable. Hence, music education reform is necessary due to the findings that using authentic curricula, developing industry collaboration, and piecing together dimension models could improve music education quality and enhance

student performance levels. In addition, the findings of this study can provide valuable insights for improving the quality of music education, which is particularly relevant for countries that have implemented certification in music education programs.

Keywords: *music education program, student performance, correlational study, quality music education framework, non-elite music institutions*

Introduction

Music education is of great importance in aesthetic education and all-around education, especially in enhancing students' cultural literacy, cognitive development, and emotional well-being (Hallam, 2023). China places great strategic importance on high-quality music education, which is reflected in the national policy. Essentially, the Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving Aesthetic Education in the New Era were released by the State Council of China (2020). This document explicitly states that higher education institutions need to improve the quality of their music programs so that they may nurture all-around talents with high artistic attainment. Provincial governments, such as the Hebei provincial government, have issued province-specific implementation plans, like the Hebei Provincial Implementation Plan for Strengthening and Improving School Aesthetic Education in the New Era (2021), to implement national policies. Nevertheless, the implementation of the policies, service quality levels, available resources, and effectiveness of music programs in this vast higher education system vary in practice, especially as they relate to social tiers and functionality. For instance, while elite conservatories and top-tier universities in first-tier cities are usually resource-rich institutions with high prestige, the non-elite provincial universities with a larger total enrollment of music majors are different from those elite institutions in unknown ways and even in particular islands of resources, prestige, or industry connection. There is a need to study provincial universities, which are specific and understudied in cultural contexts.

Discussions within the field of music education program research have increasingly focused on multidimensional frameworks of quality music education, such as the Quality Music Education Framework (QMF) proposed by the Department of Education and Training, Victoria (2022). This is a model that defines quality programs through six interdependent dimensions—engagement, excellence, creative and active, student-centered, progression, and authenticity. Drawing on the aforementioned frameworks, researchers from Western conservatories have examined elite pedagogical practices, including those of elite pedagogues in East Asia, by investigating content factors such as pedagogical excellence and pedagogical creativity, as well as phenomenon factors such as student engagement in music education contexts (McPherson, 2022).

However, there are various gaps of importance in the research scope, especially in the context of the higher education Chinese clientele. A systematic review of existing literature reveals that research in the field of music education in China primarily focused on three relatively distinct directions: early studies predominantly centered on single-dimensional aspects such as teaching methods and curriculum design (Zhang, 2026); recent research has begun to explore pathways and strategies for integrating

intangible cultural heritage into university music education (Xie, 2025); while student-centered educational concepts have gradually emerged as a research hotspot (Zhou, 2026). Furthermore, considering the “authenticity” dimension capable of explaining local cultural pedagogy, industries’ demands, and real-life application contexts, it has, however, been cited as one of the weaknesses in the curriculum of China’s music education. The curriculum has been described as having a disconnect with the local ecological system and the present contemporary service delivery (Wu, 2023). Although these studies have advanced the development of music education from diverse perspectives, existing findings often exhibit fragmented characteristics, lacking a systematic integration framework to comprehensively assess the multidimensional quality of music education. Specifically, no study has yet conducted a holistic evaluation of music education programs in Chinese universities based on a comprehensive quality assessment model (e.g., the Quality Music Education Framework, QMF), nor has there been empirical validation directly linking the various dimensions of music education quality with students’ actual academic performance.

Therefore, this study aimed to address these gaps by systematically evaluating music education programs in Hebei Province’s universities through the six (6) dimensions of the QMF framework, while exploring the correlations between these dimensions and students’ musical performance, which holds significant theoretical and practical implications. The specific objectives guiding this study revolved around the assessment of students’ perceptions of their music education program across the six dimensions of the Quality Music Education Framework, identification of the level of music performance among the participating undergraduate students, and determination of significant relationships between each of the six (6) dimensions of the music education quality program and students’ music performance ability, as well as the strength of those relationships.

The findings of this study are expected to hold significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, this research marks the first examination of the QMF framework’s applicability in a non-Western cultural context, enriching the literature in this field. Practically, the results will provide actionable recommendations for curriculum designers, educators, and policymakers in Hebei Province and similar regions, aiding them in identifying strengths and prioritizing areas for improvement. More importantly, through provincial case studies, this research underscores the need for more targeted and localized implementation approaches to national aesthetic education policies, ensuring that high-quality music education benefits all students rather than being confined to elite institutions.

Methods

Research Design

This study was based on the Quality Music Education Framework proposed by the Department of Education and Training, Victoria (2022). This study adopted the quantitative research method as the main research method to conduct an in-depth investigation and analysis of the quality of undergraduate training of music majors in three colleges and universities in Shijiazhuang City, Hebei Province, China.

This study strictly followed the norms of quantitative research and relied mainly on the questionnaire method to collect data. Through a well-designed questionnaire, data about the students’ personal situation, the current status of the quality of music professional training and related issues, and quantitative information on engagement, excellence, creative and active, student-centered, progression, and authenticity were

gathered. The questionnaire survey method had the characteristics of high efficiency and standardization, which could ensure the objectivity and comparability of the data and provide a solid foundation for the subsequent data analysis. The data were processed using SPSS analysis software (Version 26.0 for Windows).

Regarding the measurement of student performance, the participants' scores were provided by their respective music teachers based on end-of-term performance assessments. These teacher-assessed grades serve as the operational measure of student performance in this study. Given the long-standing role of instructor evaluations in music education as a valid reflection of students' technical proficiency, musical expression, and overall achievement, this measure demonstrates adequate criterion validity.

Respondents

The study involved 192 undergraduate music students selected through stratified random sampling from three universities: Hebei Normal University, Hebei Institute of Communications, and Shijiazhuang University. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 28 years and were enrolled in Grades 1 through 4. The sample included both male (48.4%) and female (51.6%) students, reflecting the gender distribution typical of music programs in Chinese higher education.

Research Instruments

A survey questionnaire was developed by the researcher for the music education program and served as the primary research tool to gather the necessary information for this study. The researcher developed a self-designed questionnaire based on the six dimensions of the Framework for Quality Music Education (Department of Education and Training, Victoria, 2022), which was then translated into operational assessment indicators. The self-developed instrument was examined and approved by four professionals in the field so as to achieve the accuracy and appropriateness of the items. Three respondents were from China, whose majors were in music education, while the other was from the Philippines. The instrument was modified according to the comments and suggestions received from the experts to ensure its validity and relevance to the focus of this study. Then, a pilot test was conducted to assess the internal consistency and reliability of the items using Cronbach's Alpha reliability test. The pilot test was carried out on 30 students who did not participate in the actual data collection. The analysis yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.80 for the six-dimensional quality scale, which suggests a high level of internal consistency and supports the reliability of the instrument. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree).

In order to measure student music performance, participants' scores were obtained from their music course instructors based on end-of-term performance assessments, rather than through student self-reports. This teacher-assessed measure serves as the criterion for student performance in this study.

Data Collection Procedure

Following the approval and cooperation agreements from the three selected universities in Hebei province, formal permission letters were submitted to the university administrators to affirm the data collection from viable respondents. The data collection was conducted in the 2025 academic year, with all questionnaires distributed anonymously online to ensure data security. Every participant received informed

consent materials that mentioned the privacy of the content, rules of the practical use, confidentiality, and data protection. After completing data collection, the researchers performed integrity and consistency checks on the collected data to exclude invalid questionnaires, followed by submitting the data to the data analysts for analysis. Finally, data analysis and interpretation were conducted.

Analysis of Data

The data were analyzed using descriptive methods, including means and frequency counts, to address the research objectives. Regarding the inferential analysis, Spearman's Rho correlation coefficient was employed to evaluate the relationships between each dimension of the music education program quality and student music performance scores.

The data collected have three key characteristics: (a) the six quality dimension scores are ordinal, as they were measured using a five-point Likert scale; (b) teacher-assessed performance scores, while continuous in principle, may not satisfy the normality assumption commonly required for parametric tests in educational research; and (c) the sample size ($N = 192$) is adequate but not large. Given these characteristics — ordinal data, potential non-normality, and an adequate but non-large sample size — Spearman's Rho is more appropriate than Pearson's correlation for detecting monotonic relationships between the quality dimensions and student performance (Pallant, 2020). All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS software (Version 26.0 for Windows).

Ethical Consideration

The study has carefully considered ethical research practices throughout the whole process of implementation. Participants were fully informed of the study's purpose, the research approach, and any potential risks before providing their voluntary informed consent to participate. In addition, appropriate data protection measures were implemented. Participants' identities were protected through the use of anonymized data, and all information was treated with strict confidentiality. The research data were stored in a secure drive, with access restricted to the research team and used solely for research purposes. Moreover, in the process of conducting the survey, the respondents' dignity and autonomy were promoted by paying attention to their views and perceptions and promoting equity by making sure there were no forms of discrimination or bias.

Prior to the commencement of the study, the research design and framework underwent formal evaluation by the Institutional Ethics Review Board. These comprehensive measures collectively safeguarded participants' rights while maintaining academic integrity throughout the research.

Results and Discussion

This section systematically presents and interprets the core findings of the study, with its structure designed to sequentially achieve three research objectives. Each set of results is followed by a discussion section that connects the empirical data with existing literature and elucidates broader theoretical implications.

The primary research objective was to assess students' perceptions of their music education program through the six dimensions of the Quality of Music Education Framework (QMF). The descriptive results summarized in Table 1 indicate that students' evaluations of program quality were generally positive, with minor variations observed.

Table 1. Student Assessments of Music Education Quality

Dimension	Overall Mean	Verbal Interpretation
Engagement	4.89	Strongly Agree
Excellence	4.31	Strongly Agree
Creative and Active	4.41	Strongly Agree
Student-Centered	4.39	Strongly Agree
Progression	4.38	Strongly Agree
Authenticity	4.19	Agree

Note. 4.21–5.00 (Strongly Agree) | 3.41–4.20 (Agree) | 2.61–3.40 (Neutral) | 1.81–2.60 (Disagree) | 1.00–1.80 (Strongly Disagree)

Student assessments of music education quality across the six dimensions in Hebei Province were generally high (Table 1). The highest mean score was observed for engagement ($M = 4.89$), followed by creative and active ($M = 4.41$), Student-Centered ($M = 4.39$), progression ($M = 4.38$), excellence ($M = 4.31$), and authenticity ($M = 4.19$).

The highest-rated item was engagement, indicating students' high level of participation across all dimensions of the music program. This finding aligns with Song's (2024) and Zhou's (2024) research on the effective application of dialogic teaching and behavioral engagement in university music classrooms. Authenticity received the lowest rating, though still within the "agree" range, suggesting that students generally believe the program effectively combines classroom learning with practical application, though room for improvement remains. This result further corroborates the observations of Liu and Su (2021) and Wu (2023) regarding the disconnection between intangible cultural heritage projects and university music curricula. The curriculum should be developed further based on Hebei's local musical resources, including traditional opera and folk music.

The excellence dimension achieved a mean score of 4.31, within the "Strongly Agree" range, indicating students' satisfaction with the program's commitment to developing musical skills, providing constructive feedback, and fostering professional growth. Timely individual feedback contributes significantly to skill and creativity development (Black & Wiliam, 2018; Tlali & Baliyan, 2021). However, students remain less satisfied with industry exposure opportunities, as masterclass sessions and lectures by industry professionals are still limited (Hebei Provincial Department of Education, 2021).

The creative and active dimension achieved a mean score of 4.41, demonstrating students' recognition of the program's effectiveness in fostering creativity and enhancing active engagement. The student-centered dimension achieved a mean score of 4.39, indicating that students perceive the program as effectively addressing their individualized needs and career aspirations. On the other hand, the progression dimension achieved a mean score of 4.38, indicating that students believed the program effectively promotes continuous and structured growth through progressively challenging content and clear evaluation criteria.

From the theoretical perspective of the Quality Music Education Framework (QMF), the performance of the six (6) dimensions in this study generally validates the applicability of this framework. The higher ratings for engagement and excellence indicate that universities in Hebei Province have achieved success in fostering deep student participation and the pursuit of excellence, which aligns with the core requirements of the QMF for quality music education. However, the relatively lower

rating for authenticity suggests that the framework's element of "connecting classroom learning with real-world application" has not yet been fully realized in provincial universities, providing theoretical grounds for localizing the QMF within non-elite Chinese higher education contexts.

Several local contextual factors may have influenced the results. First, Hebei Province possesses rich local music resources (e.g., Hebei Bangzi opera); however, the systematic integration of these resources into the curriculum remains insufficient (Hebei Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, 2022). Second, the participating institutions are non-elite provincial universities with relatively limited industry connections, masterclass resources, and off-campus practical opportunities, which partly explains why students perceived insufficient industry exposure (Hu, 2025). Third, although the Hebei Provincial Education Development Plan (2021-2025) has increased investment in aesthetic education (Hebei Provincial Department of Education, 2021), the implementation of policies into curriculum reform still requires time.

Based on these findings, the following improvements could be made to the program: increasing collaborative group work, inviting more industry professionals for lectures, offering a greater variety of activities, strengthening individual feedback mechanisms, establishing transparent channels for student input, and further enhancing the alignment of the curriculum with both local and international standards.

Table 2. Distribution of Student Music Performance Scores

Musical Performance	Counts	% of Total
90 and below	17	8.9%
91 to 93	77	40.1%
94 to 96	60	31.3%
97 and above	38	19.8%
Total	192	100.0%

Table 2 presents the breakdown of respondents based on their music performance. Among the respondents, 8.9% obtained performance grades of 90 and below. The largest proportion (40.1%) earned grades ranging from 91 to 93, followed by 31.3% who received grades between 94 and 96. Meanwhile, 19.8% achieved grades of 97 and above.

The music performance scores of respondents from Hebei region higher learning institutions show a positive skewness, whereby most respondents (40.1%) scored between 91-93, followed by 31.3% who got between 94–96, and 8.9% who scored below 90. This score distribution points to students having a refined music performance in comparison with the overall trends in music education in Hebei province. As per the Hebei Provincial Education Development Plan (2021–2025), there has been significant investment in improving music education and professional development for music teachers, leading to improved student performance in recent years. The fact that most respondents (91.1%) scored between 91 and above (91 and below) is indicative that most students are performing satisfactorily, which corroborates the study of Dai and Chen (2020) on music education level in Northern China.

Moreover, a lower percentage of students (8.9%) scoring below 90 may indicate that students who are struggling are being properly supported, and this may also be due to the quality of music teaching in these schools. Sun (2025) studied music education interventions and found successful remedial teaching for those struggling in

performance courses. Additionally, a higher percentage of those scoring 97 and above (19.8%) indicates particularly talented musicians who take advantage of opportunities for specialized training. Hu (2025) studied the excellence programs of music departments in Hebei and found that master classes and opportunities for competitions served to develop talent. Ultimately, this distribution also shows that the requirements for high-quality arts education across the board as part of the Chinese aesthetic education policy, particularly the 2020 Opinions on Comprehensively Strengthening and Improving School Aesthetic Education in the New Era, have been implemented successfully.

Table 3. Spearman's Correlations Between Music Education Quality Programs and Student Performance

Dimension	Mean	N	Spearman's rho	df	p-value	Effect Size
Engagement	4.89	192	0.533	190	< .001	Large
Excellence	4.31	192	0.606	190	< .001	Large
Creative and Active	4.41	192	0.603	190	< .001	Large
Student-Centered	4.39	192	0.512	190	< .001	Large
Progression	4.38	192	0.511	190	< .001	Large
Authenticity	4.19	192	0.559	190	< .001	Large

Note. $N = 192$, $df = N - 2 = 190$. Mean values are reproduced from Table 1. Effect size interpretation based on Cohen (1988): $\rho \geq 0.5 = \text{Large effect}$

Spearman's rank correlation analysis was performed to examine the relationships between the six dimensions of the music education program and students' music performance scores. The results, consolidated in Table 3, reveal that all six dimensions were significantly and positively correlated with music performance (all $p < .001$). The correlation coefficients ranged from 0.511 to 0.606. The degrees of freedom for each correlation were 190 ($N-2=192-2=190$). Regarding effect size, Spearman's rho coefficient itself serves as the effect size measure. According to Cohen's (1988) criteria ($\rho \geq 0.5 = \text{large}$, $\rho \geq 0.3 = \text{moderate}$, $\rho \geq 0.1 = \text{small}$), all six correlations indicate large effect sizes, suggesting that the associations between the six quality dimensions and student performance are practically significant in addition to being statistically significant.

Excellence ($\rho=0.606$) and creative and active learning ($\rho=0.603$) are the two most important performance drivers. Excellence, as the strongest driver, is a supportive affirmation of a basic tenet of music instruction: only the best top-notch pedagogy and high-performance expectations from the teacher can bring the best musical performance results. This is validated by almost universal conservatory consensus that only high-quality deliberate practice in a skill-reflective environment leads to positive performance results (Yoo, 2022). For provincial conservatories such as the Hebeis, this proves that despite the stretching of resources relative to a national elite conservatory, the quality of pedagogy, teacher quality, curriculum difficulty, and quality of feedback are the best predictors of performance; it also insists on high returns for quality investments in pedagogy. Creative and active learning's almost equal weighting, however, provides a crucially positive. Wholly, it anchors cultural activities such as music composition, improvisation, one's own interpretation of a score or piece, and collaborative measures

not as a 'dim sum menu item to be ordered in' or as part of activities that are supplemental to the main course but as 'a co-equal driver of performance development' flavor. This stirs up strong correlations to dismantle the myths that you cannot have the best of both worlds in cultural activities and violin performance. Rather, they are like yin and yang territory.

This has been further validated in contemporary research, where the challenge of cultural activities such as composition alone requires the acquisition of little expertise in music domain knowledge or the possession of skills, but of necessary higher-order thinking in the engagement of problem-solving that propels intrinsic motivation to an astronomical level. The possibility of having students create musical scores means that students convert performances to scripts or re-interpret scores, requiring students' engagement in higher-order thinking. This, in turn, augurs well for their higher-level acquisition of the requirements (Biasutti & Concina, 2020). Evans and Bonneville-Roussy (2024) even found that a creative climate of music promotes autonomous motivation, a necessary cogwheel in the wheel of practice motivation and the willingness to attempt a musical career. It has to be, then, a production line for performance excellence articles and a pilot plant factory for application and testing for cultural activities.

Moreover, the authenticity dimension recorded a high to very high level of significant relationship ($\rho = 0.559$), a result of crucial pragmatic significance, taking into consideration that it was previously rated as the lowest ($M = 4.19$) by students. The concept of the disconnect is very critical. In a sense, though the elements of local heritage, the role of work culture, and cultural engagements may be completely dormant and seem to lack existence in the provinces' institutions, as substantiated in the study of Liu and Su (2021), which supports the disconnect of the curriculum with the intangible cultural heritage, indicating that such a disconnect is highly influential and constitutes a genuine catalyst affecting students' learning experiences. The findings only imply that the infusion of culturally sensitive instructional materials in the students' instructional pedagogy repertoire like intentionally employing Hebei Bangzi opera, local cultural practices, and local genres as the core academic pedagogue performance instructional material not only contributes to the cumulative worth of preserving and safeguarding native culture and customs but also augments consistently the students' performance and interpretative skills with proper contextual utilization. The ambience of masterclasses, internships, and cultural engagement performances, therefore, bridges the gap between performance and work efficacy that naturally encourages students to stimulate attention and performance optimization. Attainment of authenticity is, therefore, not simply bridging the folklore education gap but rather a strategic tool for performance-optimizing gains.

Additionally, engagement also had a very high positive correlation ($\rho = 0.533$), which means that high levels of engagement reported are both significant and practical when it comes to the actual dimensions of performance accomplishment. Engagement, in participating behaviorally, emotionally, and cognitively in the learning process, creates conditions for the psychological and/or contextual requirements and capacity to master skills, and thus perform accomplishments altogether. These results also provide a vigorous confirmation of China's national aesthetic education reforms' educational goals to reform the traditional teacher-centered instruction approach to student-centered, interactive teaching (State Council, 2020). The results also offer ample support to the expanse of academic studies that have continually provided ample evidence to suggest that engagement is a vital psychological intervention for achieving

success across disciplines. However, music, as shown by actively engaging and cognitively participating in a rehearsal, emotionally immersing in repertoire, or via collaborative engagement, is an additional motivation and enthusiastic action that dramatically escalates performance accomplishment (Evans & Bonneville-Roussy, 2024). The intensity of the above exhibition reciprocates the engagement practices' strategies of collaborative learning, media orchestration, and diverse performance space settings as effective instruments to improve tangible outcomes.

The factors of the student-centered and progress scale dimensions had a strong, but not very high, correlation ($\rho = 0.512$ and $\rho = 0.511$, respectively). According to Ryan and Deci's (2017) self-determination theory, student-centered practices satisfy students' basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, thereby fostering intrinsic motivation. The progression dimension provides clear learning pathways through structured milestones, sequenced content, and formative feedback, helping to reduce frustration and enhance self-efficacy. These two dimensions are interdependent and provide a stable educational foundation for the realization of excellence and creative and active learning.

Moreover, the findings of this study have important practical implications for universities beyond Hebei Province, particularly non-elite provincial institutions outside first-tier cities. First, the results support the utility of multidimensional and holistic frameworks, such as the QMF, for measuring and improving music education quality. Second, despite the lower rating for authenticity, its positive association with student performance suggests that greater incorporation of local cultural resources into the curriculum could yield educational benefits.

Several local contextual factors may have influenced these results. First, Hebei Province possesses rich local music resources (e.g., Hebei Bangzi opera); however, the systematic integration of these resources into the curriculum remains insufficient (Hebei Provincial Department of Culture and Tourism, 2022). Second, the participating institutions are non-elite provincial universities with relatively limited industry connections, masterclass resources, and off-campus practical opportunities (Hu, 2025). Third, although the Hebei Provincial Education Development Plan (2021-2025) (Hebei Provincial Department of Education, 2021) has increased investment in aesthetic education, the implementation of policies into curriculum reform still requires time.

Future research may take these correlational results as a starting point to further examine the causal mechanisms and contextual effects of music education programs and student performance. Longitudinal studies may be more suitable to clarify the exact nature of the relationship between changes in certain dimensions, particularly in the clearly under-identified authenticity dimension, and performance over time. Likewise, experimental or quasi-experimental research designs using an intervention like a semester-long local heritage project may be more effective in establishing causality. Mixed-methods research can also be employed to explore the qualitative dimensions (the "how") of the students' and teachers' understanding underlying this correlational finding. Expansion of this research to other contexts in China beyond conservatories (e.g., vocational arts colleges, Western universities) and scaling up comparative studies with diverse nations may also verify the generalization and validity of this framework by possibly gaining a different set of culture-specific findings. Finally, including blinded objective performance assessments (e.g., video recordings of performances) in future research can increase the validity of the measure and result in a more reliable basis for exploring the complex interactions between multiple dimensions of quality and student outcomes in music programs in higher education.

Conclusion and Future Works

This study confirmed a significant positive relationship between the perceived multidimensional music education quality and student academic performance within a non-elite, provincial Chinese context. These findings provide empirical support for the applicability of the Quality Music Education Framework (QMF) in Chinese higher education, marking the first application of this framework in a non-Western cultural setting.

The theoretical contributions of this study are reflected in two aspects. First, it extends the cultural applicability of the QMF—originally designed for Western elite music institutions—to provincial universities in China. Second, it reveals differential strengths of association between the six quality dimensions and student performance: excellence and creative and active learning showed the strongest associations, while authenticity, despite receiving the lowest rating, remained significantly positively correlated with performance. These findings provide an empirical basis for localizing the framework to non-elite institutional contexts.

In practical terms, this study offers several implications for music education reform in Hebei Province and similar regions. First, curriculum designers and policymakers should prioritize the excellence and creative and active dimensions, which showed the strongest associations with student performance ($\rho > 0.60$). Second, although authenticity received the lowest student rating ($M = 4.19$), its significant positive correlation with performance ($\rho = 0.559$) suggests that greater integration of local musical heritage, such as Hebei Bangzi opera, into the curriculum may yield educational benefits. Third, while the student-centered and progression dimensions showed moderate correlations, they serve as foundational structures of the educational system and should not be overlooked.

It should be noted with caution that this study is correlational in nature; it cannot conclude that improving any given quality dimension will automatically enhance student performance. The results only indicate that perceived quality dimensions are significantly associated with student performance. Establishing causal relationships requires further experimental or longitudinal research.

Subsequent research may address the limitations of this study by incorporating objective performance measures (e.g., standardized assessments or jury evaluations) to reduce self-report bias. Longitudinal or experimental designs could also help establish causal relationships between specific quality dimensions and student outcomes. Expanding the sample to include institutions from diverse regions—particularly rural and vocational colleges—would improve the generalizability of findings across China's varied educational landscape. Likewise, mixed-methods approaches could provide deeper insight into how institutional resources, teacher development, and local policy support mediate program quality. Further investigation into the dimension of authenticity, including how local cultural elements such as Hebei opera can be effectively woven into curricula, is also recommended to support culturally sustaining pedagogy in music education.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) Declaration Statement

When preparing manuscripts, authors used AI tools to perform basic grammar and spelling checks. Then they also edited the content as needed.